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Enriching Lives Through Effective And Caring Service



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January 20, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Cynthia D. Banks, Director

Subject: REPORT ON HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION ACTIONS ON ISLAMOPHOBIA

On December 15, 2015, your Board passed a motion on gun violence and Islamophobia which requested the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations (LACCHR), as well as the District Attorney, Sheriff, and the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee (CCJCC), to "increase their outreach to the Muslim, Sikh, South Asian and other groups most often targeted for hate crime and to offer assistance in deterring and swiftly responding to threats and acts of hate violence; and to report back in 30 days with a description of their efforts and a summary of recent hate crimes in our county."

Outreach Efforts and Assistance

Since the December 2nd terrorist attack in San Bernardino, the LACCHR has been involved in a number of activities to preempt and stem the potential for Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes that have ensued.

In summary, within two weeks of the San Bernardino attacks, the LACCHR endorsed and mobilized participants for three major events which drew over 500 attendees and featured Muslim, Sikh, South Asian and interfaith leaders from other groups. Executive Director Robin Toma has also worked with major entities such as Los Angeles Unified School District and California State Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) to take pro-active steps in reducing Islamophobia. These actions are detailed in Attachment A of this memo.

Next Steps

The LACCHR has been working on a potentially trailblazing online training on unconscious and conscious bias, and how to reduce the harmful effects of these biases in our workplaces and community in general, which is to be completed in September in conjunction with the Department of Public Health.

Moreover, the Commission will continue to focus on combating Islamophobia through our youth programming, future training work and networks such as the Hate Violence Prevention Partnership of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County's Network Against Hate Crime. For example, Sheriff McDonnell will be meeting with our Network on February 17th.

It will continue to collaborate with other government and community organizations from targeted groups as well as encourage leadership within various sectors of society to resist stereotyping and scapegoating of Muslims, Sikhs and other groups. For more detailed information, please see Attachment A.

Reported Hate Crimes

Your Board also asked our agency to track Anti-Muslim hate crimes following the San Bernardino shootings. Based upon news media reports, we note below known reports of such anti-Muslim hate crimes in LA County:

- On December 3, the Al-Huda Islamic School in Hawthorne received a threat that everyone on the premises would be shot.
- On December 13, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Baitus-Salaam Mosque in Hawthorne was vandalized with the word "Jesus" painted on its fence. Worshipers also found an object that appeared to be a grenade inside the mosque which they later determined to be made of plastic.
- On December 13, someone scrawled, "Jesus is the way," on the Islamic Center of Hawthorne.

We are working with the Sheriff and many police departments in our county to obtain other reports of anti-Muslim hate crimes during this period. It is also important to note that the FBI estimates that for every hate crime that is reported to police in the U.S., there are anywhere from 22 to 40 unreported hate crimes that go unreported.¹

¹ As part of our annual analysis and report on hate crimes in L.A. County, we requested hate crime reports from the Sheriff and the more than 43 police departments in LA County for calendar year 2015 and are currently in the process of obtaining and analyzing them.

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We deeply appreciate the prompt action taken by this Board to send a message to not blame the acts of violent extremists on an entire religion, race/ethnicity, or people of a particular country.

Please let me know if you have any questions or your staff may contact Robin Toma, Assistant Director, at (213) 639-6089 or at rtoma@css.lacounty.gov.

CDB:OS:RT:rt

Attachment

c: Chief Executive Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Below is more detailed information regarding actions taken by the L.A. County Commission on Human Relations with regards to outreach efforts and assistance to potentially targeted communities as well as monitoring anti-Muslim Hate Crimes during this recent 30-day period:

Outreach Efforts and Assistance

- Endorsed and mobilized participants for a December 10th solidarity community march, rally, and vigil which brought together over 300 participants including Japanese Americans, Muslim Americans, Sikh Americans, faith leaders and community members in Little Tokyo.
- On December 11th Executive Director Robin Toma spoke to over 100 concerned Muslim men and women at the Islamic Center of the San Gabriel Valley, one of the largest mosques in Los Angeles County, sharing advice and practical tips on dealing with Islamophobia.
- Helped publicize the "Finding Our Voice" rally held at Los Angeles City Hall on December 13th denouncing the terrorism and hate of the San Bernardino massacre as well as the Islamophobic incidents since then. L.A. City's Mayor & interfaith leaders were featured speakers.
- In December, Executive Director Robin Toma initiated a motion for action by Los Angeles Unified School District's Commission on Human Relations, Diversity and Equity that urges the Board of Education to act to deter anti-Muslim/Middle Eastern bullying, discrimination and hate among the nearly 700,000 students and staff.
- Executive Director Toma met in December with the Director of the California State Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) to discuss hate crimes, potential projects and the use of state anti-discrimination laws within DFEH jurisdiction to discourage anti-Muslim scapegoating and discrimination by businesses.
- At its first meeting of the year on January 4, 2015, the LACCHR unanimously voted to ratify the Commission President's decisions to support your Board's motions on Syrian refugees and Islamophobia.

Next Steps

- Continue to encourage courageous leadership and urge leaders in all realms of society (particularly law enforcement, political, education and faith leaders) to send a message to their constituencies encouraging mutual respect, and denouncing the scapegoating of entire groups of people for the actions of extremists.
- On January 19, Commission staff will attend the first coalition meeting of #VigilantLOVE, dedicated to combating Islamophobia and violence.
- The February 17th meeting of the Commission's Network Against Hate Crime will feature Sheriff Jim McDonnell and leaders of the Muslim and Sikh communities to discuss recent hate crimes and anti-Muslim incidents that have swept the nation.
- Continue collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service to plan a community forum aimed at educating the Muslim community about hate crime and resources available to assist victims.
- Continue to work with The Council on American-Islamic Relations to receive reports of anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents for inclusion in the Commission's annual Hate Crime Report
- Continue collaboration with the CCJCC on its potential role in increasing outreach to targeted communities, and deterring and responding effectively to hate violence.
- Include educating and training young people to be leaders in addressing anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ discrimination through the Commission's Youth Summit.
- Seek support and resources to build community networks for hate crime victims and preventive educational efforts through groups such as the Hate Violence Prevention Partnership.
- Develop a communications guidebook and trainings to reduce implicit bias/unconscious prejudice, a significant factor in creating fear and hostility towards Muslims and other groups.
- Seek resources to expand the training's applicability and use to other agencies and institutions, evaluate its impact and refine it to make it as effective as possible at reducing prejudice.
- Continue collaboration on dealing with Islamophobia and potential hate violence with community organizations such as Muslim Public Affairs Council, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund and Council on American Islamic Relations.